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Connecticut Light & Power Co., and Western Massachusetts Electric Co. seek Corps permit to construct new transmission lines

CONCORD, Mass. – The Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P) and the Western Massachusetts Electric Company (WMECO) are seeking a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct work in waters of the United States in conjunction with construction of transmission lines in north central Connecticut and western Massachusetts.

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve the electric transmission systems of CL&P in Connecticut and WMECO in Massachusetts.

The work includes the discharge of dredged or fill material and work over navigable waters for construction of new 345-kV transmission lines extending from North Bloomfield, Conn., to Ludlow, Mass., including the reconstruction and re-configuration of portions of existing 115-kV transmission lines on right-of-way in Agawam, West Springfield, Chicopee, Springfield, and Ludlow, Mass. Associated work also includes separation and reconstruction of an existing 115-kV transmission line in Manchester, Conn.

The applicants are proposing to fill (temporary and permanent) inland wetlands/waters and perform work over navigable waters in association with the construction of two separate but dependent projects, identified as the Greater Springfield Reliability Project (GSRP) and the Manchester to Meekville Junction Circuit Separation Project (MMP). The GSRP consists of the construction of approximately 35 miles of a new 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line to complete a 345-kV “loop” through north central Connecticut and western Massachusetts and the reconstruction and reconfiguration of portions of existing 115-kV transmission lines on right-of-way (ROW) in Agawam, West Springfield, Chicopee, Springfield, and Ludlow, Mass.

The separate but dependent MMP (required to support the GSRP improvements) involves separation and reconstruction of an existing 115-kV transmission line occupying 2.2 miles of existing transmission line right-of-way between Manchester Substation and Meekville Junction in Manchester, Conn.

The Connecticut portion of the GSRP involves construction of approximately 12 miles of new overhead 345-kV transmission line, following an existing CL&P right-of-way, and related facilities. From CL&P’s North Bloomfield Substation in Bloomfield, Conn., the GSRP traverses through the towns of Bloomfield, East Granby, and Suffield northerly to the Connecticut/Massachusetts state border (approximately 12 miles). This new 345-kV transmission line will be located within the boundaries of an established overhead transmission line right-of-way, and adjacent to other existing transmission lines.

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The Massachusetts portion of the GSRP involves construction of approximately 23 miles of new overhead 345-kV transmission line, within existing WMECO right-of-ways, from the Connecticut/Massachusetts state border through Agawam, West Springfield, Springfield, Chicopee, and Ludlow, terminating at the Ludlow Substation. Portions of existing 115-kV transmission lines on right-of-way in Agawam, West Springfield, Chicopee, Springfield, and Ludlow will be reconstructed and re-configured and a number of existing distribution lines will be relocated to accommodate the proposed 345-kV and 115-kV transmission line work. The 115-kV transmission line work also includes approximately four miles of 115-kV transmission line upgrades along existing "spurs" or right-of-ways intersecting the 345-kV route in three locations: Orchard Junction, Exit 6 Junction, and East Springfield Junction.

The GSRP in Massachusetts also includes a new overhead transmission line crossing (for the new 345-kV transmission line) over navigable waters (Connecticut River) between West Springfield and Chicopee, Mass.

New structures to support the new 345-kV transmission lines will consist of steel monopoles or wood-pole H-frames. Associated work will include construction of two new switching stations at existing utility properties in Chicopee (Fairmont Switching Station) and Springfield (Cadwell Switching Station), construction and expansion outside of the fenced area at the existing North Bloomfield, Agawam, and Ludlow Substations (on lands owned by CL&P and WMECO, respectively), and modifications within the fenced areas at the existing Orchard Substation and at the existing Shawinigan Switching Station.

The MMP, located entirely in the Town of Manchester, is within an existing right-of-way. The existing 115-kV circuit and an existing 345-kV circuit are supported on common transmission line structures. For the MMP, the 115-kV circuit will be reconstructed on a new set of structures, and the 345-kV transmission line will be left in place on the existing double-circuit structures. Each circuit will then be supported on independent transmission structures. Five existing 115-kV double-circuit structures will be relocated to accommodate the 115-kV circuit.

The application for the federal permit was filed with the Corps of Engineers in compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which regulates the discharge or fill of material in United States waters, including wetlands; and with Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, which provides for federal regulation of any work in, or affecting navigable waters of the United States. The public notice can be viewed on the Corps website at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>. Select Regulatory/Permitting and then weekly public notices.

Public comments on the Corps permit review (File # NAE-2007-3018) should be forwarded no later than April 2, 2010 to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, Regulatory Division (ATTN: Susan Lee), 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751. Additional information is available from Permit Project Manager Susan Lee at 978-318-8494 or toll free 800-343-4789 or 800-362-4367 (if calling from within Massachusetts) or by email to: susan.k.lee@usace.army.mil.

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